Social Justice: Catalysts and Barriers to Progress

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“Invisible Barriers to Social Justice
School Policies and Practices

- School suspension and disciplinary policies
- School mental health referrals vs. suspension
- Financial support and resources
- Lack of school vision to address cultural responsiveness and equity

DeAndre Arnold Ordered to Cut His Dreadlocks to Walk at Graduation

School Policies and Practices
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Cultural Context of Schools

1639 First Public School for White boys
1817 Missionary Schools established to convert Native American children to Christianity
1864 Congress makes it illegal for Native Americans to be taught in their native languages
Native children forced to attend boarding schools
1870’s Segregated Schooling
1954 Brown vs. Board of Education – segregation became unconstitutional
1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act: Tribes have the power to run their own education and health programs
2016 Last school desegregated in US (Cleveland High School in Cleveland, MS)

Goals of “Schooling” During Colonization

• Foster and promote western cultures
• Erasure of indigenous culture, practices, and history (Cultural erasure)
• Produce “civilized” students
• Successful school model centered on control, obedience, pacification

Today’s Inequities

Disproportionate suspension rates
Higher expulsion rates
Fewer Gifted and Talented courses
Funding & Resources
Overpolicing
School to prison pipeline

Systemic Racism in Mental Health

APA apologizes for longstanding contributions to systemic racism
NASW apologizes for racist practices in American social work
Jan 17, 2021
APA Apologizes for Its Support of Racism in Psychiatry
Jan 18, 2021

Systemic Racism in Mental Health

- Mental health professionals helped to remove Native American children from their families and place them in boarding schools
- Mental health professionals helped recruit Black men into the Tuskegee Experiment
- Support and promotion of eugenics and racial hierarchies
- Enslaved people who had the desire to be free were diagnosed with “drapetomania”

(American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, National Association of Social Workers)
Inequities in Mental Health Care

Students from marginalized groups are less likely to......
• Have access to quality mental health care
• Receive relevant psychoeducation

And more likely to....
• Experience mistreatment
• Receive a misdiagnosis

Reflection

• What policies and practices in your schools/districts/organizations are harmful and oppressive?
• What healing-centered policies and practices need to be developed and implemented?
• Is your school a place of harm or a place of hope and healing?
• Does your school prioritize schooling over health and well-being?
• Is the current system working? If yes, for who?

A Paradigm Shift is Needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From Here</th>
<th>To Here</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Punitive and exclusionary discipline</td>
<td>Restorative Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky behaviors cause disease</td>
<td>Systemic oppression and inequities lead to poor health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deficit-based</td>
<td>Strength-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-focused</td>
<td>Solution focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>Radical Healing</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIPOC experiences are not centered</td>
<td>Appreciate and uplift lived experiences of BIPOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual self care</td>
<td>Collective Care/Well-being</td>
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Catalyst: Imagine the Possibilities

What is your vision?

How will you measure success?

What will be generated from engaging in culturally-responsive, anti-racist, and equitable actions?

(In)visible Barrier: Our Emotions
“It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people.”
– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Difficult Dialogues about Race:
- Reveal major differences in worldviews
- Intense emotions (dread, anxiety, anger, frustration) emerge
- Desire to dilute or end the discussion
- Avoidant behaviors

Fear
- Fear of discomfort
- Fear of change
- Fear of confronting privilege
- Fear of acknowledging bias and racism
- Fear of doing/saying the wrong thing
- Fear of being perceived as angry/radical/incompetent
- Fear of the unknown

Catalysts: Do The Work!
- Speak out about injustices and oppression when you see them
- Name/identify the systems of oppression and power that are operating and their impact
- Hold others accountable and take accountability for our own actions
- Do something you don’t get any praise or recognition for
- Acknowledge what you don’t know or are unfamiliar with
- Call others “in”
- Lean into the discomfort

VULNERABILITY IS KEY!

Silence Breakers
1. I’m not sure if this will make any sense, and/or …
2. Can you help me understand whether what I’m thinking right now might be problematic?
3. It seems as though some people may have had a reaction to that. Can you help me understand why?
4. How would you respond to … from a social justice framework?
5. This perspective is new to me, but I’m wondering if it is accurate to say that … ?

USE THE INTERNET!

Power and Privilege
- What conditions exist that maintain the power of specific groups?
- Whose ideas are not considered because they are not in a position of power?
- How will you use your power to disrupt existing systems?
- How will you create safety?
In(visible) Wounds: Stress and Isolation

Educator Quality of Life

- 61% - work is always or often stressful
  - “This job is stressful, overwhelming and hard. I am overworked, underpaid, underappreciated, questioned and blamed for things that are out of my control.”
- 26% - were bullied, harassed or threatened at work
  - 58% identified the bully as a co-worker, principal, administrator or supervisor

32% - Experienced poor mental health on 7 or more days within the past month
  - “There isn't much support for teachers suffering from mental health issues…”
  - “Working with kids with high incidences of trauma leads to secondary trauma, which we just started to get some training on last year.”
25% - Black and Hispanic employees report discrimination at work
  - Teachers of color suffer burnout from the ‘invisible tax’

Got Rest?

- How is value measured in this society?
- Work Hard --- Play Hard
- Are we a society that is at war with rest?
- It takes courage to rest!

Work Environment

- Almost 40% of adults experience feelings of isolation at work
- Almost 50% feel disconnected from their jobs and have a negative perception of the company where they work
- Over 30% of Black employees feel undervalued and disrespected at work
- Hispanic and Black workers: feel more alienated from co-workers, more lonely, more emotionally distant at work, and more detached from the rest of their teams in high-stress situations

(Cigna, 2020; Society for Human Resource Management, 2020)

Create a Sense of Belonging

- Develop affinity groups
- Diversify DEI efforts
- Provide varied opportunities for feedback and listen
- SPARK Model for Fostering Belonging (Ransom)
  - Make SPACE for Authenticity
  - Learn to be PC (Professionally Competent, People Centered, and Personally Compassionate)
  - Develop an ACCEPTANCE mindset
  - Sponsor and encourage REPRESENTATION
  - KNOW your biases

“...Whether we prevail is not determined
By all the challenges that are present,
But by all the change that is possible...”
- Amanda Gorman